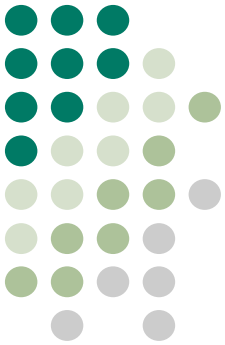
Aviation System Plan Study Team

Meeting Summary
July 25, 2003
Embassy Suites Hotel
15920 West Valley Highway, Tukwila, WA

Advisory Committee members in attendance
Burr Stewart, Port of Seattle
Carol Key, FAA
Christopher Hysom, Senate Republican Caucus
Dick Larman, CTED
Doug Maples, City of Yakima
Kelly Simpson, Senate Transportation Committee
Michael Shane, Port of Seattle
Terry Reitz, City of Ocean Shores



Project staff in attendance
John Sibold, WSDOT
Theresa Smith, WSDOT
Stan Allison, WSDOT
Robin Warner, WSDOT
Rita Brogan, PRR
Meg O'Leary, PRR

Welcome
John Sibold welcomed the study team members and thanked them for their participation in this important information gathering process. Recommendations from this group will be considered carefully and used as a guide for WSDOT staff as they develop a plan for a more effective state aviation system.

WSDOT has been tasked to review the state's entire aviation system. This study team, along with two others (Education, and Search and Rescue), will help staff fulfill this legislative requirement. Mr. Sibold reviewed the meeting agenda and reviewed the charge to study teams, which is to:

Analyze
- Examine current situation
- Review federal, state and local mandates
- Anticipate emerging issues

Recommend
- Vision
- Strategic priorities
- System definition

Study Team Decision Process
Theresa Smith provided an overview of the decision process for the Aviation System Plan Study Team. She explained that the team has four primary tasks, which are to identify needs and emerging trends, develop a system vision, discuss strategic priorities and develop recommendations that will be reviewed by the Aviation Advisory Committee, along with a public involvement process. The input of this group will be taken into account in the development of the Aviation Division's short-term business plan and its longer-term strategic plan.

Overarching Issues
Ms. Smith reviewed the overarching questions that are being asked by the Aviation Division as it begins its planning effort. These include:

- Are we positioned to respond to the rapidly changing aviation environment?
- Are we using our limited resources effectively and efficiently to meet State's interests in Aviation? What should our key priorities be?
- What strategic changes need to be made to satisfy the state's aviation policy, i.e., preservation, safety, capacity and environmental protection?

Aviation System Overview
Ms. Smith provided descriptions of the current state aviation system, which include:

130 Airports in the State System Plan
40 Cities (31%)
13 Counties (10%)
31 Public port districts (24%)
25 Private (19%)
17 State (13%)
4 Owned jointly (3%)

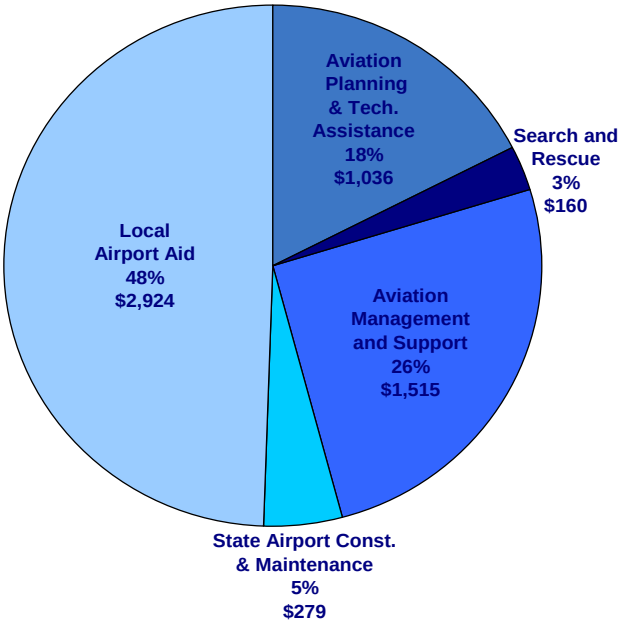
The National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) is comprised of:

- Primary Service—scheduled commercial service serving 10,000+ passengers per year
- Commercial Service—scheduled commercial service serving 2,500 to 9,999 passengers per year
- Reliever—general aviation airport and primary airport congestion reliever (relieving general aviation demand on a designated primary airport)
- General Aviation—general aviation airport

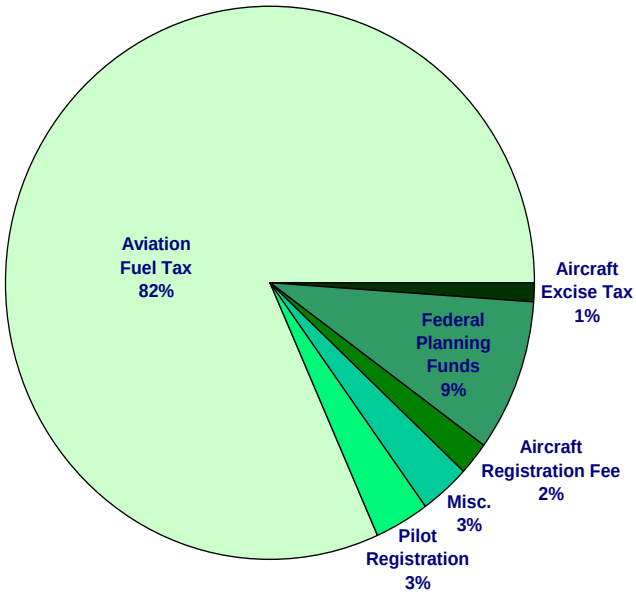
The forecasted budget of the WSDOT Aviation Division is:

2001–2003 **$5.8**
2003–2005 **$4.9**
2005–2007 **$4.5**
2007–2009 **$4.6**
2009–2011 **$4.9**
2011–2013 **$5.2**

Aviation Division Functions



Aviation Revenue



Aviation Biennial Budget

	Forecast without Tax Increase *2003 – 2005*	Forecast Increase with Tax Increase *2003 – 2005*	Forecast Revenue *2003 – 2005*
Pilot Registration	$ 140,295	$ 123,384	$ 263,679
Aircraft Registration	$ 73,812	$ 65,245	$ 139,057
Fuel Tax Rate	$ 3,255,823	$ 1,317,332	$ 4,573,155
TOTAL	$ 3,469,930	$ 1,505,961	$ 4,975,891
Airport Aid Grants	$ 1,200,000	$ 1,382,577	$ 2,582,577

System Planning Questions

Ms. Smith reviewed some specific questions that the Aviation Division is posing to the System Plan Study Team. These are:

- What should key components of an aviation system in Washington State be?
- Should WSDOT operate airports? If not, what are the alternatives?
- Should WSDOT provide financial assistance to all airports, or only to those that qualify for matching funds?
- What considerations should be factored in when developing priorities?

Aviation Policy Overview

Ms. Smith then provided an overview of the State Aviation Policy, which a number of the members of this Study Team helped to shape. She reviewed some key milestones in the evolution of State aviation policy:

1970 FAA begins funding state airport system planning
1973 Washington's first State system Plan completed
1990 AIRTRAC created (SB 6408)
1993 Transportation Commission calls for seven-part statewide air transportation and investment program (Resolution 477)
1998 Washington State Aviation Policy adopted
1998 Washington State Aviation Policy adopted by Transportation Commission (Resolution 567)
2002 Aviation Division Business Plan process instituted, Aviation Advisory Committee established
2003 Aviation Division Strategic Planning begins

Next, Ms. Smith provided a summary of current aviation policy, which is structured around four areas of state interest. Those policies are:

1. Preservation

It is the State's interest that aviation facilities and services be preserved that provide access for all regions of the state to the nation's air transportation system, provide for emergency management, and support local economies.

- Land use encroachment
- Wetland mitigation
- Economic role of airports
- General aviation airport preservation funding

2. Safety

It is the State's interest that transportation by air be safe.

- Aviation infrastructure funding for safety needs and maintenance of our air system

3. Capacity

It is the State's interest that there be sufficient airport capacity to respond to growth in demand to ensure access across the State, the nation and the world.

- Statewide context of air capacity
- Regional mitigation approaches
- Surface transportation connections

4. Environmental Protection

It is the State's interest that negative environmental impacts of airports on people and the natural environment be mitigated.

System Investment Goals

Ms. Brogan presented some proposed system investment goals, which are:

- Maximizing investment value and impact
- Meeting priority needs
- Anticipating emerging trends and issues
- Maintaining equity in current investments

Study team members offered the following points during the discussion of System Investment Goals:

- Reframe goals and broaden focus beyond investment
- Where is WSDOT with respect to the 1998 Washington State Aviation Policy?
- Consider impact of encroachment by cell towers
- Gaps exist regarding who should assume roles and responsibilities for addressing encroachment, i.e., should FAA play a role?
- Increase harmonization among policies and regulations and between agencies and government departments

Challenges and Opportunities

Before considering needs and gaps, the group decided it best to discuss some of the challenges and opportunities. What follows are the topics raised by study team members.

- Difficulties securing local match even if state and federal funding is available
- Emergency medical needs in rural areas require connections to the aviation facilities—many rural medical facilities are closing because of a lack of service
- WSDOT should look at location of rural hospitals in relation to rural airports in order to find needs and gaps
- Is there a way to prioritize relative importance of state's airports to determine what is really driving economic development in a given region?
- General aviation may not be vital to the state economy—this question should be considered

- Role of tourism in the future of the state's economy is very significant—consider locations where people will want to attract tourists
- Consider opportunities for float plane service linking areas within the state
- Once we lose an airport, it's gone. What is WSDOT's criterion for protecting airports?
- Consider grass strips instead of pavement for smaller rural airports
- See how airports connect to other modes of transportation in order to maximize local economic development opportunities
- E-business economy means opportunities for rural areas and increased needs for rural airport access—examine changes in state economy
- Look at competition from other modes of transportation that decrease demand on aviation, and vice versa
- Look at rural areas with redundant airport service like successful NPIAS airport in Methow and the smaller municipal facility in Twisp. Do you protect both? Should all state general aviation airports be considered equally?
- Weigh functions and uses for each airport, then compare and evaluate relative value
- Consider other areas within state that have great potential for new airport facility (where one doesn't already exist), and identify areas of future population growth
- Identify strategic needs in state, look at current locations of airports, funding opportunities and contributions to state and region—WSDOT needs this data in order to prioritize

Needs and Gaps

As a starting point for the discussion, the study team was asked to consider the following:

- Aviation fees generate $10 million per year, but $10 million is needed just to maintain pavement condition
- At current rate, 25% of the total system will have failed runways by 2016
- Rural airports lack tax base to adequately maintain their critical aviation link
- What are the most critical needs and gaps in the State Aviation system over the next Biennium?
- What is the State's role in addressing these needs and gaps? Should there be changes in current direction?
- Who are the additional partners in addressing these needs and gaps?

Study team members offered the following points during the discussion of Needs and Gaps:

- Consider setting requirement for local matches as prerequisite for state funding
- Consider whether WSDOT should focus on funding physical improvements or system planning
- Make aviation eligible for other sources like the public works trust fund (for information visit: www.infrafunding.wa.gov)
- WSDOT should take more active role as advocate for aviation development—for example wetland issues, cell tower construction—not just preservation

- Look at different types of partnerships, for example environmental agencies, Boeing and transportation links
- Look at combining administration of grant funds into one agency
- Access and identify gaps in availability of aviation facilities for emergency medical and commercial needs
- Identify state airports that could be returned to local governments for management and maintenance
- Need to develop a prioritized system of airports in the state
- Address long-term (20 year need) issue of capacity of commercial airports, i.e., what is state's role? Should it be market driven? Or driven by the state, Port of Seattle or WSDOT?
- Smaller airports don't have resources to deal with new security guidelines
- Have alternate airports been identified for security purposes?
- Are we meeting cargo needs? Can WSDOT be advisor to smaller airports?
- Tension between developing rural communities and those with existing airports
- Should state have expanding role in determining appropriate zoning near airports, zoning strategies, education and outreach?
- Develop minimum standards and tools that educate local airports on ways to become economically self-sufficient

Emerging Trends

As a starting point for the discussion, the study team was asked to consider the following:

- What intermodal opportunities should be explored?
- What is the impact of the decline in aviation professionals?
- What are the implications of emerging technology?
- How does growth in the business aviation market impact future aviation system needs?
- How does aviation's future affect Washington communities?
- What are the emerging trends in the State Aviation system over the next Biennium?
- What is the State's role in addressing these emerging trends?
- Who are the additional partners in addressing these emerging trends?

Study team members offered the following points during the discussion of Emerging Trends:

- 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, BC will have big impact on local aviation
- Point-to-point flying for commercial service will affect aviation system
- Changing and emerging GPS technology in aviation may reduce need for ground-based systems and therefore may increase use of smaller airports
- New experimental aircraft, sport aviation and growth in other types of aircraft means a change in the complexity of the state aviation system and more business springing up for smaller rural airports. Should WSDOT have airfields dedicated to specific types of aviation? Should WSDOT develop standards?
- Consider impact of "urban flight" and shift of population from urban to rural to escape Puget Sound Traffic and growth

- Look at areas in which population growth is occurring and look at location of strategic airfields
- Distribution centers are relocating to Yakima/I-82 area in order to take advantage of central location and avoid Puget Sound traffic
- What is appropriate role of state in accommodating aviation growth—such as utilities and infrastructure—assuming there is available land and opportunities for public/private partnerships?
- Evaluate process for evaluating maintenance needs—perhaps shifting from pavement to grass runways would be more practical
- It will be important to work with local government to reinforce local commitments
- Consider sustainable development and indicators of sustainability at it relates to general aviation, fuel and emissions
- Consider impacts of these trends: commercial airlines are becoming bankrupt, communities are losing aviation service and those services are becoming more expensive
- Consider current trend: aviation funds are shifting towards improving security
- There is increased need for aviation training, education in light of aging aviation worker population

Next Steps

John Sibold thanked the group for their participation in this study team session, and outlined future action items for the group.

August 28	Aviation System Plan Study Team meeting #2
September 16	Developing strategic priorities
October 14 (optional)	Recommendations for developing State System Plan